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The Classical Weekly

VOL. XV, No. 15

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1922

WHOLE No. 411

PRESIDENT BUTLER ON PRESENT-DAY EDUCATION

(Continued from page 106)

President Butler next pays his respects (27-29) to the study of education as carried on—in large degree wrongly, he seems to believe—in our Normal Schools, Colleges, and Universities. In this study of education he finds trouble, because

... there is too much study of the wrong thing and too little of the right thing.

What really should be studied by those who are preparing themselves to teach and to direct the work of education is the aim of the educational process, its most useful subject-matter, its philosophic basis and the history of its development. Very little time should be spent upon methods of teaching. Methods of teaching are purely personal and are the effective application by an individual of the controlling principles upon which his work is based. Excessive devotion to the study of method quickly develops an educational self-consciousness that is destructive either of true effectiveness or of a correct relationship between teacher and taught. Given the possession of sound principles of education, the teacher should then be left with the least possible direction to give full expression to his own personality in his method of teaching.

Probably history was never better taught to college students than by Francis Lieber . . . This admirable method of teaching was quite peculiar to Professor Lieber. . . Perhaps no one else could imitate it and gain equal success . . .

Similarly, Theodore W. Dwight taught law to a generation of grateful students by a method entirely his own. Every attempt to imitate it failed because that method was solely a reflection of Professor Dwight's own remarkable personality.

The too intense study of method in education will quickly sterilize the whole teaching process. It is partly through the exaltation and exaggeration of method that present-day education in elementary and secondary schools has become so wasteful and so inefficient. The one sound basis for effective method in teaching is a thorough understanding of the subject-matter to be taught. Education cannot dispense with scholarship.

President Butler, with his wide and profound knowledge of the history of educational thought and practice, and his mastery of educational 'literature', will be the last man to resent the declaration that the basic ideas of the preceding quotation are not ideas personal to himself alone³. They have been said, in part at least, by teachers of the Classics often in private discussions; they have been said at times by them at their public gatherings, and in their periodicals. I have myself tried to say something of this sort,

in an editorial, *A Campaign for the Classics*, *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 9.97-98, 105-106, 113-114, the main thought of which was that knowledge and personality are the indispensable elements of a good teacher; not a word was said in that discussion about methods of presenting what one knows. I tried it again in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 11.1-5, 9-13, in an article, *The Teaching of Vergil in Secondary Schools*, in which the stress, virtually at every point, was laid on what the teacher of Vergil ought to study and to know; it was taken for granted that the teacher, if a real man or woman, would, when properly equipped with knowledge of subject-matter, have little difficulty in presenting that subject-matter effectively. I tried again to say it in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 14.9-11, in an editorial entitled *The CLASSICAL WEEKLY as a 'Practical' Aid to Teachers of the Classics*. But, however much they have thought these things and have said or wished to say them, teachers of the Classics will be the first to admit that what Dr. Butler—the first head of what is now Teachers College—has said on this theme will be more effective than the combined utterances of them all, oft repeated.

How necessary even to many teachers of the Classics Dr. Butler's words are I have had sad occasion, lately, to learn again. A friend told me, recently, of what his sister had said to him about a classical meeting at which there had been presented a paper on Vergil—not a pedagogical paper, but a paper embodying an attempt to view the poem throughout in certain aspects. The lady in question is, for the time, teaching Latin. Neither in this paper on Vergil nor in anything else at this meeting did she find, said her brother, anything to help her in her class-room work. That reminded me of the statement I repeated in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 14.9, as made to me by a man giving a course for teachers (! ! !) of Latin, that these persons had not been interested in an informational article, dealing, let us say, with the journey of Aeneas, but were always clamoring to know, How would you present this point, or that point, to a class? Can anything be more pitiful than the passion to learn how to present, to others, what one does not know, and has no desire to know?

Such thoughts as these come home with special force to one who combines with editorial functions the task of making programmes for classical meetings. He hears again and again the cry for something 'practical'. In so far as he ever gets a concrete suggestion as to what is meant in this cry by the word 'practical', the suggestion has to do, always, among those who raise the cry, with making the presentation in the class-room 'vital'; it never has to do with the enlarge-

³In *School and Society*, May 18, 1918 (7.571-580), there was an article entitled *The Teaching of the History of Education in Normal Schools*, by J. H. Stoutemeyer, of Kearney, Nebraska, in which such teaching was vigorously condemned.

ment of knowledge, the widening of vision, the enrichment of self.

Dr. Butler's words, cited above, lead me to express once more my personal creed, as editor, as maker of programmes, as individual who would fain be true scholar and real teacher.

Can we make our programmes and our periodicals 'vital' by articles about method? I answer, emphatically, No. Methods are, as Dr. Butler says, in large degree personal; they depend on the peculiar combinations of qualities that go to make up the individuals practising the methods. This is not to deny that much can be learned by a real man or a real woman, through a consideration of what others have done and are doing in presenting a given subject, once the real man or the real woman, besides knowing the subject, knows the basic principles of education, its history, and its aim, to recur to Dr. Butler's pronouncements. But all the study in the world of other persons' methods by a person without personality (may the accidental oxymoron be forgiven!) or without knowledge of subject-matter will be without avail. Not many years ago I had occasion to ask a friend connected with a large publishing house what was the matter with the Classics in a certain School in a large town (I had heard rumors of difficulty there). His answer was that so-so-so, full of enthusiasm, but without the requisite knowledge, had sought to bring about the millenium in the teaching of Latin by introducing the Direct Method. Here was the verdict of one who, at least, stood outside the direct line of fire in this once ardent controversy—a controversy which, as it chanced to be conducted in this country, dealt with method largely to the exclusion of knowledge. So far as the whole discussion did good, it did good, in my judgment, because it taught some, at least, that knowledge is essential to sound teaching, by any method.

But, assuming that much profit is indeed to be gained from papers on method, on class-room devices, it is to be said that there is, in print, already in this country an immense deal of material of that sort. It is all easily accessible. Any one who thinks about it, seriously, for a moment will know where to look for it. Why should it be perpetually reprinted? What a bore such reprinting is to those who really have profited by it, and what a worse bore to those who have never needed it, or have had little need for it! If it be rejoined that we are constantly confronted with a new crop of teachers, the obvious reply is that there ought to be available, for such teachers, a bibliography of this material, to which they can be referred.

I should myself regard as a wonder of wonders the teacher of Latin who could say much (if anything) that is new about ways to present subject-matter in the class-room. On the other hand, there is endless opportunity to present new material for teachers who seek to enlarge their knowledge, widen their vision, broaden and deepen their sympathies, as a means of making *themselves* more vital, and so more competent to present, in vital fashion, the constantly expanding stock of their knowledge.

I shall make here two more observations. I am very glad, indeed, that the Committee on the Position of the Classics in the Educational System of the British Empire stressed the importance to teachers of Latin of a knowledge of Greek (see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 15.8). How can any one hope to teach Latin rightly without a knowledge of Greek? Teachers of Latin need that knowledge, not that they may cite Greek words, or even passages from Greek authors, to their pupils, but for their own enrichment, their own vitalizing, and their own socializing (if I may in one sentence use two awful words).

I quote next the substance of what I said the other day to members of a Graduate Course in Latin, mostly teachers. If, in a given College or University, there should be given, at the same hour, by the best possible teachers—without possibility of change of hours of either course—a course in Plautus and a course in Aeneid 1-6 or in the Orations of Cicero Commonly Read in Schools, the teacher ought without hesitation to choose the course in Plautus rather than the course in Vergil or that in Cicero. Abstractly, as a general observation, I declare it to be my positive conviction that to the person really capable of growth any course dealing with things outside one's daily tasks will the more surely minister to his enrichment. I read the other day some one's fine statement that it matters not what one studies, so long as he meets enough persons who study other things. So far as my specific illustration goes, it may be that my own interest in Plautus and in Roman comedy lead me to attach undue importance to the idea that, through the study of Plautus, the teacher of Vergil and Cicero would most effectively get that mastery of the language which one must have as an indispensable prerequisite to the study of any part of Latin literature as literature.

But that is a detail. What I really wish to say, with the utmost possible force, is that knowledge and personality to me sum up the major part of the whole matter of teaching. Method is largely personal, as Dr. Butler says.

(To be concluded)

C. K.

SOME VERGILIAN PROBLEMS AND RECENT VERGILIAN LITERATURE, CIRCA 1896-1920

(Concluded from page 110)

- Fowler, W. Warde: Aeneas at the Site of Rome. Observations on Aeneid VIII (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1917. Pp. 128).
- Fowler, W. Warde: Virgil's 'Gathering of the Clans'. Observations on Aeneid VII, 601-817² (*Ibidem*, 1918. Pp. 98).
- Fowler, W. Warde: The Death of Turnus. Observations on the Twelfth Book of the Aeneid (*Ibidem*, 1919. Pp. 158).

These three volumes, with their learned exegesis, the result of a life's labor of love, will rightly be recognized as symptomatic of the twentieth century's return to a deep appreciation of Vergil. Vergil's unchallenged